



Participation is Essential for a Budget that Represents Neighborhood Interests

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, December 03, 2007

City Hall Diary

As we know, San Jose is made up of council districts and, as a result, many of us have come to identify with these boundaries and/or borders. I know I have. I was raised in Willow Glen. My parents live in the same home they bought over 30 years ago. Most of my life experiences centered around my neighborhood; therefore, my view of the world was somewhat sheltered until I became an adult when I moved to downtown San Jose for 10 years and traveled to over 40 countries.

I often refer to my travels as my best learning experience. My travels taught me that the people of the world have many more similarities than differences. Other countries may have different food, geography and languages, but the need for love, a safe place to live and some kind of economic vitality was present in everywhere I visited.

When I look at the council districts in San Jose I compare them to the countries that I went to. Each district may have subtle differences based on geography, etc. However, for the most part, each district wants the city to provide the services it is expected to provide, such as street maintenance, slowing cars down on neighborhood streets, maintaining parks, code enforcement and public safety. I have chaired the Traffic Calming Meetings in which we had one meeting in each council district. Although the issue was traffic calming, many of the residents would speak to me afterwards about these other essential services.

I was a bit surprised to hear so many people in every district in San Jose sharing the same needs with me. In response, I encouraged them to attend and be part of the Mayors' Community Budget Process which is open to everyone. It's important for different groups to share their opinions regarding the finances of City Hall.

For example, Bob Brownstein, former budget director for Mayor Susan Hammer, recently told me that if you add up all property taxes from residential and commercial properties that the city of San Jose receives, it only pays for 60 percent of the annual police budget. Did you catch that? The other 40 percent of the police budget and the money needed for the salaries for the other approximately 5,000 city employees comes from sales tax and utility tax, among others. It is important to have basic information like this to fully appreciate the magnitude of the city's revenues and costs.

Help put the San Jose puzzle together and become part of the budget process. Put these dates in your BlackBerry:

Mayors Budget Shortfall Advisory Group Thursday Jan 10th from 6:00-9:00 PM at City Hall. For more information go to this [link](#).

Mayors Community Budget for Neighborhood Priorities meeting Saturday January 19 from 9:00 AM 12:00 PM at City Hall.

Strong Neighborhood Initiative areas have top-ten lists for action items in their specific areas.

What should San Jose's top ten be?

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